

# Feedback

## Is golf handicapped?

Although I have not applied for reinstatement to amateur status, with the exception of a selective program of teaching, I have been apart from the fulltime business of golf for three years. Prior to entering the real estate business, I held head professional positions at four northern California courses, came close to being selected ahead of Bud Erickson for the LPGA executive position and devoted seven years of energy and drive toward creating full acceptance for United States Golf Handicaps, a service organization.

For many months I have been sorry to see increasing evidence of the losing battle being felt in golf. The crest of popularity golf experienced in the early and mid 1960s has been deteriorating with alarming consistency. Your account of the address made by Arnold Palmer to the 50th anniversary meeting of the GCSAA in Toledo gives further evidence of this trend. For what it may be worth, I would like to volunteer some positive "feedback".

In 1962, United States Golf Handicaps was created by a broad minded group who recognized a need that existed then — and still does. This was a computerized service offered to some 80 percent of the paying, playing golf public who were unable to establish the vitally needed golf handicap. Before this crusade came to its financial demise in 1969, USGH created a subscribing following, at its peak, of nearly 6,800 members. This figure was still some 3,000 below the membership needed to reach a break-even point and, with a tight money situation and no promotional budget, USGH faded away. However, in those seven years I learned a great deal about an extreme weakness in the world of golf. For one, I found that a great segment of the enthused playing public who could be classed as affluent, suffered the lack of a handicap simply because of an archaic ruling which calls for membership in a club recognized by the United States Golf Association.

I find it tragic in a sense when USGA, in order to stem the flow of red ink in their operation, can do no better than to enlist Arnold Palmer to lend his name to a money raiser aimed at the neglected golfers of the country who are asked to send \$12 in order to obtain a USGA decal, bag tag and a rule book.

New enthusiasm, and the kind of enthusiasm that could endure and create new growth, can be generated if USGA, PGA or the National Golf Foundation (or all three) can find the way to provide a handicap to every golfer who makes the investment for equipment and pays the vital greens fees. As your article stated Palmer as saying, "golf might be losing its hold on the American public". One way to turn this situation around would be to give more consideration to the middle class American player. The country club set has had the

thrust of the USGA energy for too long to expect anything more than stagnation.

**Pete Leslie**  
San Jose, Calif.

## Proud of his pro

I am writing to let the industry know about J. D. Ruffner, a man who has served the business for going on 25 years. He has been at the same club during his entire career as a head pro. As a colleague, I am proud to work with such a club professional.

Recently, we honored him with a dinner and I along with more than 280 others paid tribute to quite a pro. He is quite a person too.

**George Polillo**  
Superintendent  
Country Club of Decatur (Ill.)

## Muni not yet maxi

As a private citizen, I think golf offers a truly distinctive recreational opportunity. As the city planner for the City of White Plains, N.Y., it is obvious to me there are not enough public golf courses to satisfy the needs of the people.

In our county of Westchester, we are not advocating that the county build new, full-sized golf courses. We should, though, be ready to purchase and run any private membership courses which decide to cease operations. Over the next 15 years, such events are possible and probable. All municipalities should be looking at this aspect to expand their recreational facilities.

Reading GOLF BUSINESS over the years, I have seen a number of articles showing municipalities building new facilities or purchasing private courses and running them at break-even or even profit, with excess funds used to make improvements or purchase other facilities. The City of Cincinnati has an excellent program, as does neighboring Stamford, N.Y. with its excellent Sterling Farms facility.

Programs initiated by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation can greatly aid municipalities in such purchases.

**Michael Rosner**  
White Plains, N.Y.

Do you have a gripe with the industry? Or praise for some facet of it? Voice it in *Feedback*: a forum for your ideas on topics we have or haven't covered in GOLF BUSINESS. Readers interested in expressing their views can write to Feedback, GOLF BUSINESS, 9800 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102.

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